

Rev. Kathleen Day



Your Honor,

February 1, 2023

I am writing to you regarding James Meek and the pending decision of releasing him from custody pending trial. I first came into contact with James in 2014 when four Americans were being held hostage by ISIS. James devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy in reporting in such a way as to bring to light the concern, pain and ultimately grief of the families of the hostages held by ISIS. Over the course of the last 9 years, I have been contacted by James on several occasions asking if I would make myself available to another loved one of an American held hostage abroad, in order to offer comfort, guidance or encouragement. In his reporting, he gained the trust of families and loved ones of hostages, service members, and those who supported our country's efforts abroad, because he did not exploit their emotions nor risk someone's safety for a headline. From my conversations with James, it was evident that he remained supportive in the lives of people whose stories he highlighted long after the headlines passed, offering the support and assistance he could provide to ease their pain, promote healing and to pursue justice on behalf of their loved ones.

I have also read the details of the serious charges he faces. I have some understanding of the weight judges must carry in navigating cases involving such serious charges and a person of notoriety for their efforts to promote justice and lift the voice of those who feel powerless in the face of those who bring these very charges. It is complicated and perplexing on many levels.

My understanding of pretrial norms is that if the person is not believed to be engaging in or at risk of engaging in the criminal actions which they are facing in trial, and not believed to be a danger to society, and if there is reason to believe they will appear in court, that because we as a society hold fast to the concept of innocent until being proven guilty, that pretrial detention is not the norm. These charges are very serious. James' long history of steady work, devoted parenting, commitment to justice for those who have suffered, and lack of criminal record seem to me to weigh toward pretrial release.

I have counseled James on spiritual and religious matters, including during this past year. I believe he will fulfill his responsibility to follow the guidelines and requirements of the court. In consideration of these serious charges, I commit to do what is within my power and influence to support the court's conditions of release, urge and reinforce compliance with all conditions of pretrial release.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

*Rev. Kathleen Day*

